



*Communities of*  
**COASTAL GEORGIA FOUNDATION**  
*Strengthening Our Communities through Engaged Philanthropy*

**Strategic Plan 2015-2018**

Adopted - December 3, 2014

## Background and Introduction

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The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation was formally incorporated in March 2005, thanks to the visionary efforts of some 70 community and foundation donors. When launched, the group envisioned an engaged philanthropic endeavor which would have lasting value and impact for the quality of life in Coastal Georgia. Encompassing Camden, Glynn and McIntosh counties, the Foundation realized its initial funding objective in 2012 when the original pledges to the Founders Fund were fulfilled.

Since its formation, the Foundation has grown markedly in size and form. The Foundation began its work with about \$1 million and now, nine years later, has assets exceeding \$13 million. Nearly 40 funds are under management by the Foundation, most in Donor Advised Fund arrangements. Another 10 legacy gifts have been pledged.

CONSTANT IN MISSION. FLEXIBLE IN SCOPE.  
WE ARE SHAPED BY DONOR  
INTERESTS AND PASSIONS.

The Foundation has maintained a commitment to community-building through its grantmaking program. Each year, through donor advised funds and a

competitive grants process, the Foundation invests about one-half of a million dollars in community improvement through worthy organizations across Glynn, Camden and McIntosh counties and beyond. Areas of interest include education and youth serving programs, health and human services, arts and culture, history and heritage, crisis intervention, workforce development, faith-based initiatives, environment, and animal welfare. The beauty of a community foundation is that it reflects the interests of its donors and the special assets and developmental needs of its communities. Since its inception, more than \$4 million in grants has been awarded by the Foundation.

In anticipation of its Tenth Anniversary, the Board of Directors of the Foundation engaged in a two day strategic planning work session. They gathered input from donors, grantees and stakeholders across the three-county area. They considered economic, social and demographic factors. They learned from the experiences of other highly successful community foundations, with particular emphasis on the exemplary work of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia.

In the following pages, the Board outlines an aggressive three-year strategic plan designed to stabilize and grow the organization. Three core thematic goals have been established: sustainability, scope and scale, and significance. Strategies to achieve these goals are detailed.

The Board celebrates the dynamic formation of the Foundation and its myriad early successes. Yet, the Board recognizes that the full promise of the Foundation is yet to be realized. The coming few years are pivotal, and the Board is committed to securing the future of regional philanthropy through the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation.

## Sustainability

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For a community foundation, sustainability relies on size as well as the right balance of key assets. The Coastal Georgia Foundation is less than a decade old, and its total assets have grown at a respectable pace. The challenge, however, is that the organization has neither an operating endowment nor substantial unrestricted assets which typically come by way of bequests. As such, the foundation has relied on the contributions to the Founders Fund to maintain operations since its inception. It was the appropriate tact in the early years while the Board and staff worked to build new funds. Now, however, it is time to aggressively move to shore up, diversify and grow the assets of the Foundation.

In the coming three years, sustainability is the primary goal for the Foundation.

Sustainability has no firm “end” and the target will continue to move as each objective is met.

The following objectives, which are building blocks to sustainability, will be achieved during the coming three year period:



- Building an unrestricted, Operating Endowment which exceeds \$3 million. The first \$1.2 million should come from the Founders Fund account now designated as “quasi-endowment.” The Foundation recognizes that this fund cannot be endowed until the full \$3 million or more has been raised. The annual earnings from the Operating Endowment will be used to ensure the future of the organization. The corpus could be called upon in the event of a natural disaster or other emergent need.
- Promoting new and repeat supporters through a “sustainers fund,” similar to the Founders Fund initiative.
- Expanding regional philanthropy through new Donor Advised Funds. Total support from asset-based fees should account for fifty percent or more of the Foundation’s annual operating budget by the end of this planning period. Presently, these fees account for about 30% of the annual budget.
- Enhancing the Foundation’s value and respect among the region’s non-profit agencies such that more of them, as appropriate, would turn to the Foundation to host agency funds, both endowed and restricted.
- Heightening awareness of the Foundation to increase the numbers of donors, through estate planning, tax advantaged gifts and traditional and more innovative means of giving.
- Developing more active and successful relationships with professional advisors, including estate planning attorneys, to ensure maximum visibility for and utilization of the Foundation.

- Seeking grant support from mature, partner Foundations to provide operating assistance over the next three years while the sustainability efforts are underway.

Over the next three years, the Foundation must be “donor centric,” focused on building an operating endowment and engaging new fundholders, both individuals as well as appropriate agencies. Marketing the Foundation’s value and its long-term significance must be a central theme. Further, the pool of knowledgeable advocates, from board members to professional advisors to fundholders, must be expanded to ensure many in the community have a positive view of -- and an affirmative story to tell about -- the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation.

## Scope and Scale



The Foundation needs to expand its base of engagement across all three counties. When possible, the Foundation should think regionally about issues and investments. The Board should establish priority areas for grant-making prior to the

beginning of each calendar year. These priorities should be determined in keeping with community feedback, socio-economic data, and areas in which the Foundation can fill gaps or promote existing assets. The Foundation should strive to avoid duplication and should work to strengthen the capacity of existing, qualified organizations for the delivery of services and programming.

With the primary goals of growing philanthropy and enhancing the work of non-profit organizations, the Foundation will undertake the following initiatives in the coming few years:

- Establishing and supporting a donors roundtable, to be called Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy. The group will include key fundholders from the community foundation and other foundations and philanthropic partners who have an interest in investing in the quality of life in Coastal Georgia. An executive council will provide voluntary leadership to the group.
- Improving relationships with professional advisors through regular visits and communiques.
- Convening a professional advisors forum, to include attorneys, investment and financial advisors, and estate planners, which would meet several times a year around topics of their choosing. The forum would allow greater engagement with and among professional advisors, which the Foundation must rely upon for client referrals.



- Supporting the legal community in the establishment of a regional estate planning council which would meet a couple of times a year to discuss issues selected by the group.
- Working with the Georgia Center for Non-Profits to expand the capacity and expertise of non-profits and other community-based service organizations across the three county region.

With respect to its scope, the Foundation also must guard against “mission creep.” Central roles for the Board are establishing short-term and long-term priorities and oversight of operations. During regular Board meetings and committee work, the Foundation will benchmark performance on the goals and initiatives set forth in the strategic plan.

## Significance

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The Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation desires to become the respected and trusted source for convening and supporting philanthropy across the Coastal Georgia region. To do so, the Foundation must expand its visibility and impact.



The new mission statement along with Board member identity should be prominent in all materials and communications. Using its new marketing materials, the Foundation should manage its image and brand rigorously. The website should be redesigned in early 2015, with a goal to provide fresh content on a weekly basis. During the Tenth Anniversary year, a host of cost-effective but engaging materials should be produced, including a celebratory “decade report” which would be distributed at a community-wide event.

During the next three years, the Foundation should ensure its primacy and its perpetuity for the region and its communities through key activities:

- Hosting *Philanthropy Summit*, as a significant community event, in spring 2015 to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Foundation, pay tribute to the Founders and to launch Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy.
- Involving Board members fully as ambassadors and advocates for the value and growth of the Foundation.
- Showcasing the impact of past and future grantmaking across the three county area.
- Continuing investment in discretionary grantmaking with a focus on near term impact leading to long range, measureable outcomes.
- Engaging Partners in Philanthropy and other donors with the objective of targeting grantmaking in areas which promise tangible results for community improvement.
- Engaging actively in community-planning, capacity building and economic development activities across the three counties.
- Offering support to interested donors in adjacent communities.

- Measuring progress and impact through metrics using an established dashboard. Metrics are to be presented each month as a means to measure Board and Staff activities toward goal attainment.

In addition to building new philanthropy and service capacity, the Foundation will support cross-cutting programming, like Coastal Georgia Honor Flight, as a means to fill a vital role and introduce new partners to the work of the organization.

## Summary

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In preparation for its Tenth Anniversary, the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation adopts a strategic plan which celebrates its formation and decade of philanthropy while crafting the path forward necessary to ensure the Foundation's lasting success. During the 2015 through 2018 period, the Foundation will focus its energies on:

Sustainability – Creating lasting value for donors and the community

Scope and Scale – Growing the reach and depth of the organization

Significance – Strengthen the relevance and impact of the Foundation's work

The Board will use its considerable talents to succeed across each of these domains of work. Board meetings will be structured to advance understanding of Foundation operations and promote issues of substance. A dashboard of performance metrics will be used to monitor progress and identify areas of accomplishment or needed improvement.

Recommitted and re-energized with clear goals and pathways for achievement, the Board of Directors and staff of the Foundation enthusiastically embrace the next decade. During these next ten years, the Foundation will move from its infancy into adulthood with the resources, the partnerships and the vision to *strengthen our communities through engaged philanthropy*.

Our mission statement is just six words. Yet within the simplicity of our purpose resides the promise of a profound and open-ended embracing of all the good that can happen when the generosity of today enriches and ensures the generations of tomorrow.